

PSYD15H3: Current Topics in Social Psychology
Applied Behavioural Science
Winter 2021

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Virtual Office Hours: Thursday 4pm-5pm or by appointment

Course Description

Behavioural scientists have been studying the processes underlying judgment & decision-making for decades. For this long, we have known that people do not always behave as we would expect – in other words, we do not always behave “rationally”. We often make “irrational” decisions and evaluate our past, present and potential future experiences in unexpected ways. Interestingly, these irrationalities are not random. This course aims to provide students with an understanding of the subconscious, yet distinct and measurable patterns of these irrationalities. Critically, we will challenge assumptions about how human beings ought to act and about what constitutes “rational” behaviour as we understand it.

In recent years, many organizations in both the private and public sector have begun leveraging insights from behavioural science to “nudge” peoples’ behaviours in desired directions. This course aims to expand beyond the laboratory and draw from real-world field experiments and case studies, in addition to empirical work, to help students draw connections between scientific studies and real-life implications.

The general **goals and objectives** of the course are to help students:

- a. Learn and gain mastery over basic facts, research findings, terminology, principles, and theories important in the field of behavioural science.
- b. Practice and develop critical thinking skills, written and oral communications skills.
- c. Analyze current issues and controversies in the field of behavioural science.
- d. Make connections between theoretical concepts and implications for behavioural change in the real world.

Given the upper level format of this course, the main objective will be to expose you to new ideas, and to encourage you to develop and expand the way you think about and express your own ideas. In pursuit of these goals, a significant portion of your grade will come from participating in online discussions with your classmates, reflecting on how the concepts/theories we cover apply to your life/the real world, and how we can use the concepts from this course to design our own interventions for behavioural change.

Textbook & Course Materials

Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. New York: NY, Penguin Books.

- Additional readings for this class will be comprised of journal articles, blog posts, online videos etc. These will be posted on Quercus.

Attendance

Because this is an online course, weekly attendance at a certain time is not required. However, there will be **select Thursday evenings that will require your attendance** via Bb Collaborate. These are: Jan 14th, March 4th, April 8th, and whichever date your group is presentation is scheduled for (all Thursdays at 5pm).

Late Assignments

All weekly reflections are due at 5pm each Thursday. Late reflections will not be accepted. Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 10% for every 24 hrs that the assignment is late.

Grade Breakdown

	Weight	Due Date	Details
Group Presentation	20%	Week of topic assigned, Thursday at 5pm <i>(with the exception of week 2, which is due Monday, Jan 25 @ 5pm)</i>	A recorded group presentation synthesizing that week's topic + posting of discussion questions and moderating week's discussion on forum.
Weekly reflections	10% (2% per reflection)	Thursdays at 5pm	Post reflection on weekly topic on the discussion forum for 5 reflection topics.
Online discussion	10%	Ongoing	Students will be responsible for responding to other students' posts & weekly discussion questions on an ongoing basis.
Nudge challenge #1	25%	First draft: Feb 23 @ 5pm Final draft: March 4 @ 5pm <i>(attendance required)</i>	Students will work creatively in groups to respond to a nudge/behavioural intervention challenge.
Nudge challenge #2	25%	First draft: March 30 @ 5pm Final draft: April 8 @ 5pm <i>(attendance required)</i>	See above.
Feedback for peers' nudge challenges	10% (5% x 2)	Challenge 1: Feb 25 @ 5pm Challenge 2: April 1 @ 5pm	Student groups will be responsible for providing feedback on other students' nudge challenge drafts via PeerScholar.

Group Presentation:

- In groups of 3-4, you will cover one of the topics from this course (excluding the intro). Your task will be to read all the relevant material/watch videos etc and identify the key theme(s) that emerge.
- You will create a PowerPoint presentation, which you will present to me via Bb Collaborate. The recording of your presentation will be posted for your classmates to have access to.
- **Your presentation should answer the following questions:**
 - *What is the key theme or conclusion we can draw from this research?*
 - *Which assumptions about "rational" behaviour is this research is challenging?*
 - *What are the underlying psychological principles/cognitive biases that explain these findings?*
 - *What implications do these findings have for how we can think about changing behaviour?*
- You should also succinctly (using graphs/visuals) summarize a couple of studies that support the key message of your presentation in a compelling way. Always relate the study back to the main idea.

- **IMPORTANT:** the goal of this assignment is **not** to describe every experiment you read about (if I wanted to do that, I would re-read the articles).
 - **Discussion Questions**
 - Your group will also be responsible for posting 4 thought-provoking discussion questions in the discussion forum and “moderating” this online discussion based on the responses received from other students.
 - These questions are **not meant to be comprehension questions**, but rather questions that can start a critical dialogue.
 - **Examples are:** limitations of the research, ethical implications, replicability in other contexts, asking about personal examples or examples from real life etc.

Weekly Reflections:

- On 5 select weeks, I will be posting a reflection assignment, which will reflect the topic covered for that week.
- **You will be responsible for responding to these assignments** by posting your response on the discussion forum.
- Each reflection is worth 2% and will be graded mainly on completeness. **A well-thought-out reflection will receive the full 2% (one that combines theory/concepts to real life), and a mediocre reflection 1%. The response should be approximately 500 words.**

Online Discussion:

- Throughout the course of the semester, students are expected to:
 - **Respond to weekly discussion questions posted by “presenting groups”**
 - **Respond to other students’ weekly reflections**
- The purpose of this is to facilitate dialogue among students and critical reflection on the course topics.
- **You are required to contribute at least 3 responses per week** (either to the same thread, or multiple threads).
- Responses will also be evaluated on quality and depth and **your ability to connect make connections between the readings/concepts and real life. If your goal is to earn the full 10%, ensure that you are putting effort into your responses.**

Nudge Challenges:

- In groups of 5, you will be required to write an assignment for 2 Nudge Challenges. There will be several challenges to choose from.
- **The challenges will require you to think about how to “nudge” or change a specific behaviour based on concepts from the course and behavioural science more broadly** (e.g. how can we curb drunk driving? How can we help people recycle more? Etc).
- The assignment should be approximately 3-4 pages in length and should properly cite the relevant studies and concepts (at least 6) you drew on to support your nudge/behavioural intervention.
- You will be graded on **creativity, practical feasibility, and theoretical relevance.**
- **All groups will pitch their challenges to the entire class via Bb Collaborate.** You should create 2 slides for the presentation. The pitches should be 5 mins.
- The whole class will then vote anonymously for their favourite pitch. The winning group will get an extra 5% added to their Nudge Challenge grade.
 - **Peer Review**
 - Using PeerScholar, you will both receive feedback from your fellow students, and will also be required to provide feedback to one group on the first draft of your assignment.
 - You will then use this feedback to edit/improve your assignment, explaining how you used this feedback.
 - **10% of your grade (5% per nudge challenge) will come from the quality of feedback you provide to your peers.**

Grade Breakdown for Nudge Challenges:

First draft	10%
Response to peer feedback	5%

Final draft	10%
Total	25%

Course Schedule

Jan 14	Introduction: Thinking fast & slow (attendance required @ 5pm) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: pages 1-83</i> <i>Intro to Behavioural Science Lecture Slides</i>
Jan 25 (Note: this is a Monday)	How context and framing skews decision-making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How Anchoring, Ordering, Framing, and Loss Aversion Affect Decision Making: https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2011/03/how-anchoring-ordering-framing-and-loss-aversion-affect-decision-making.php Furnham, A. & Boo, H.C. A literature review of the anchoring effect. Toll et al., (2007). Comparing gain and loss-framed messages for smoking cessation with sustained-release bupropion: A randomized controlled trial Supplementary material: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sara Garofolo: Loss Aversion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2EMuoM5IX4 TED talk by Dan Gilbert – Why we make bad decisions The decoy effect: https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190801-the-trick-that-makes-you-overspend
Jan 28	Happiness & perceptions of value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schadke, D.A., & Kahneman, D. (1998). Does living in California make people happy? Ariely, D. Loewenstein, G., & Drazen, P. (2006). Tom Sawyer & the construction of value. Gilbert, D.T., & Ebert, J.E.J. (2002). Decisions and revisions: The affective forecasting of changeable outcomes Supplementary material: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The price of wine influences taste: https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/baba-shiv-how-wines-price-tag-affect-its-taste TED talk by Dan Gilbert – The surprising science of happiness
Feb 4	Group work for Nudge Challenge #1
Feb 11	What we remember <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chajut, E., Caspi, A., Chen, R., Hod, M., & Ariely, D. (2014). In pain thou shalt bring forth children: The peak-and-end rule in recall of labor pain. Healy, A. & Lenz, G. S. (2014). Substituting the end for the whole: Why voters respond primarily to the election-year economy. Kahneman, D., Fredrickson, B. L., Schreiber, C. A., & Redelmeier, D. A. (1993). When more pain is preferred to less: Adding a better end. Supplementary material: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TED talk by Daniel Kahneman – The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory
Feb 18	Reading Week
Feb 25	The psychology of defaults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: chapters 6, 10, 11</i> Johnson, E.J., & Goldstein, D. (2003). Do defaults save lives? Carroll et al., (2009). Optimal defaults & active decisions. Patel, M.S., Day, S.C., Halpern, S.D. (2016). Generic medication prescription rates after health system-wide redesign of default options within the electronic health record. Supplementary material: Defaults are not the same by default: https://behavioralscientist.org/defaults-are-not-the-same-by-default/
March 4	Nudge Challenge #1 Presentations (attendance required @ 5pm)
March 11	Group work for Nudge Challenge #2
March 18	Present bias & bounded self-control

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. <i>Nudge: chapter 2</i> • DellaVigna, S., & Malmendier, U. (2006). Paying not to go to the gym. • Ariely, D., & Wertenbroch, K. (2002). Procrastination, deadlines & performance: Self-control by precommitment. • Ariely, D., & Loewenstein, G. (2006). The heat of the moment: The effect of sexual arousal on sexual decision making. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choiceology podcast – Season 2, episode 2: https://www.schwab.com/resource-center/insights/content/choiceology-season-2-episode-2
March 25	<p>The puzzle of motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lepper, M. R., Greene, D., & Nisbett, R. E. (1973). Undermining children's intrinsic interest with extrinsic reward: A test of the "overjustification" hypothesis. • Ariely, D., Gneezy, U., Loewenstein, G., & Mazar, N. (2008). Large stakes & big mistakes • Gneezy, U., & Rustichini, A. (1988). A price is a fine. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TED Talk – Daniel Pink – The puzzle of motivation
April 1	<p>Irrational ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mazar, N., On., A., & Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance • Cialdini et al., (2006). Managing social norms for persuasive impact. • Rand, D.J., Green, J.D., & Nowak, M.A. (2012). Spontaneous giving & calculated greed. <p><u>Supplementary material:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TED talk by Dan Ariely – Our Buggy Moral Code
April 8	Nudge Challenge #2 Presentations (attendance required @ 5pm)

Tools for online collaboration/learning:

Tool	Purpose
Bb Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All group presentations • Collaborating with your group members for presentations, nudge challenges etc. • Office hours
Quercus Discussion Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posting your weekly reflections • Posting discussion questions for “presenting groups” • Responding to posts
PeerScholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing and receiving feedback on your nudge challenges

Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Other Emergency

For missed term work (assignments and term tests) due to illness, emergency, or other mitigating circumstances, please follow the procedures outlined below.

Notes:

- The following reasons are not considered sufficient for missed term work: travel for leisure, weddings, personal commitments, work commitments, human error.

- Missed Final Exams are handled by the Registrar's Office and should be declared on eService: <http://www.utoronto.ca/registrar/missing-examination>
- Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, you would need to file a petition with the Registrar's Office: <https://www.utoronto.ca/registrar/term-work>

Accommodations for Illness or Emergency:

For missed work due to ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY, please complete the following **two-step** process:

1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>) and email it to Keely Hicks at keely.hicks@utoronto.ca ,
and
2. **Declare your absence** on ACORN (Profile & Settings > Absence Declaration)

Deadline: You must complete the above steps **within 3 business days** of the missed work.

Note: For this semester, we do not require any additional supporting documentation (ex. medical notes) to support your missed term work accommodation request.

Accommodations for Academic Conflicts:

For missed term work due to an ACADEMIC CONFLICT (i.e. two quizzes or tests scheduled at the same time), please complete the following process:

1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), choosing "Other" as your reason for missed work and explaining the conflict in the space provided.
2. Take screenshots of your course homepages that demonstrate the conflict.
3. Email the form and screenshots to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca).

Deadline: You should report the conflict to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier.

Note: Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered conflicts. Accommodations may only be possible in the case of quizzes and tests that are both scheduled during the same discrete period. Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered conflicts.

Note: Students are responsible for keeping their course timetables conflict-free. Students who choose to register in two synchronous courses with overlapping lecture/tutorial/lab schedules may not necessarily be accommodated.

Accommodations for Religious Conflicts:

For missed term work due to a RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, please complete the following process:

1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), choosing "Other" as your reason for missed work and noting "Religious conflict" in the space provided.
2. Email the form to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca).

Deadline: You should report the conflict to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier.

Accommodations for Time Zone Conflicts:

If you are physically in a different time zone and a quiz or midterm is scheduled outside of 7:00am to midnight in your local time, please complete the following process:

1. Complete the **Time Zone Conflict Form** (<https://uoft.me/PSY-TimeZone>), and

2. Email the form to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)

Deadline: You should report the conflict to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible, if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier.

Accommodations for Students Registered with AccessAbility Services:

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to ACCESSABILITY REASONS:

- **Contact your AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) detailing accommodations required.

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to ACCESSABILITY REASONS:

- If your desired accommodation is **within the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” and you need 3 days):
 1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>).
 2. Email the form and your **Accommodation Letter** to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca).
- If your desired accommodation is **outside the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that):
 1. **Contact your AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) detailing the accommodations required.

After submitting your documentation:

Within approximately one to five business days, you will receive a response from your instructor detailing the accommodations to be made (if any).

You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily, as accommodations may be time-critical.

You should continue to work on your assignments to the best of your ability, as extension accommodations may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency.

If an accommodation has been granted but you are unable to meet the conditions of the accommodation (ex. you need a longer extension, or you missed a make-up test), you will need to repeat the missed term work procedure and submit additional forms to request further accommodation. Note that in the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not be provided.

Completion of this form does not guarantee that accommodations will be made. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request for accommodation.

Missed Accommodations

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting the requirements of your accommodation, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations.

(E.g.) If you miss a make-up midterm, you would need to submit another Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form and declare your extended absence on ACORN.

Importance of Three Business Day window:

If you are unable to submit your documents within the three business day window, **you must email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) within the three business day window** to explain the nature of the delay, and when you will be able to provide your documents. Exceptions to the documentation deadline will only be made under **exceptional circumstances**.

Questions?

If you have any questions about this Missed Term Work policy, please contact Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **well before** the date of the test / assignment deadline to describe your circumstances and inquire about procedures.

AccessAbility Services

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach the instructor and/or the AccessAbility Services Office (in SW-302) as soon as possible. Your instructor will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential. The UTSC AccessAbility Services staff members are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations.

AccessAbility Services contact information Phone: (416) 287-7560 Email: ability@utsc.utoronto.ca

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences are outlined in The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic

Matters: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

- On tests and exams: (a) Using or possessing unauthorized aids; (b) Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test; (c) Misrepresenting your identity.

- In academic work: (a) Falsifying institutional documents or grades; (b) Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.